

# Caregiver Connection

January 2011

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.  
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION

## Adults helping kids Mentors and adoptive parents

January is National Mentoring Month, a time when adults are particularly encouraged to take a young person under their wing and help mentor them, primarily to help them achieve success in school.

Both the Department of Social and Health Services and Children's Administration, in partnership with others in the state, have given such programs an increased emphasis. This edition will have a story on the current mentoring initiative and an adult mentor and youth.

You will also see sprinkled throughout this edition quotes from news stories done during November's National Adoption Month and the state's Adoption Day, November 19. Links to the stories are included.

## Adoption

### A home for the holidays

We begin with this great sentiment from Molly Turner, an adoptive mother of four in Richland: .....

"My kids came with no medical needs," she added. "However, all needed a heart transplant, and I was the donor."

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2010/11/14/1251961/w-richland-family-more-than-doubles.html>

And we add these remarks from Justin at an Adoption Day celebration. ....

Hi, .....

My name is Justin and I am 12 years old. I am a sixth grader at Big Mountain Elementary. When my mom asked me if I wanted to speak today, I was a little nervous. But, I decided that I should take the chance because I know how great adoption is. You see, on December 5th, it will be two years since I was adopted in this exact courthouse. That was the most special day of my entire life.

Being a foster kid was confusing and scary because I didn't know what was going to happen to me. The day I became adopted, I knew I wouldn't feel that way ever again. I know that my mom and dad are always going to be there for me. When they promise me they are going to do something, I know they will do it. In our family, we keep our promises.

Not all days in our house are perfect. We are just like everyone else. But, I know that even when we have a hard day, we will always wake up to a brand new day together. That is part of being a family.

We really like to spend time together. My parents come to watch me play sports, sing in my school choir, and go on bike rides and ...my favorite....go on vacation. Also, since my mom is a teacher at my school, she makes sure I do tons of homework. But the good news is that my parents are always willing to help me with that, too!

Adoption day is a day that makes you feel different ways. I told my parents it made me feel a happy-sad. They said they understood. Then they told me that adopted kids are actually luckier than other kids because we have more people in our life to love us.

I hope this day is as special for you as it was for me. And remember...if you ever think your parents are being hard on you, it's only because they love you so much and they want you to have a good life.

Thank you for letting me speak here today.

Happy Adoption Day!

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## Who mentored you?

When adults are encouraged to be mentors, the question is often asked, “Who mentored you?”

“Most kids... have parents who can help them with their issues, including life issues, homework, things like that,” said Jim Pritchard, a program manager with Children’s Administration. “Foster children and youth often don’t.”

To help foster youth increase their success in school and transition into adulthood, the Department of Social and Health Services is building on a successful program in Tumwater to match adults with foster youth. The program started four years ago with 30 foster youth matched with adults through the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. Over the past 4 years, 100 mentor relationships have been set up.

“85 percent of those youth are still in school or graduated,” said Tom Pennella, Mentoring Administrator for DSHS. The normal rate for high school graduation among foster youth is about half that.

“We took a look at that program and said, ‘we need to replicate that,’” Pennella said.

Washington State Mentors, collaboration between DSHS and College Success Foundation, secured a federal grant for mentoring. Some of that money was targeted to expanding the mentoring program into the Everett, Bremerton and Kent Children’s Administration offices, with plans to grow beyond that. A video campaign is planned to encourage mentoring.

Creating partnerships between agencies is a key to growing the program, Pennella said.

But the partnership that is most important is the one between the youth and the mentor.

Children’s Administration is building a public awareness campaign around child welfare, part of which is encouraging mentoring relationships.

“As part of the campaign, we wanted to give people something to do, at any level,” said Sherry Hill, director of communications

for Children’s Administration. “It’s a pretty easy thing to do to be a mentor. And it gives the youth someone who can serve as a role model, and someone to connect with and talk to – give them a view of how life can be – something to work for.”

Lynne Welton has been a mentor since spring 2008 for Ryan Cummings, who will graduate this spring from high school. Welton is a trainer for foster parents and caregivers for Children’s Administration.

“It seemed like something pretty easy to do to help kids and stay connected,” she said. “I feel strongly, passionately about this. Anybody can do this.”

Pennella said one goal of the program was to keep the paperwork to a minimum while still seeking to make sure any matches would be safe and helpful. The program asks for a year commitment so kids don’t lose another adult in their life as the relationship develops.

If you want a mentor for your foster child age 8-18 and live in one of the areas for the pilot program, call your social worker, who can make a referral to one of the agencies that makes matches. There are also mentor agencies in many other areas of the state that have the ability to mentor a foster child.

For further information, Tom Pennella can be reached at 360-902-7797 or [tom.pennella@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:tom.pennella@dshs.wa.gov)

Washington State Mentors can be reached at [info@wamentors.org](mailto:info@wamentors.org)

Tawnja and Johnny Chen adopted four-year-old Nolan. The Chens’ 23-year-old daughter, Tandra, joined (her parents) for the ceremony, doting on her little brother. Though she’s not ready for kids yet, getting to know and love Nolan has opened up her heart to adoption. “It’s a really happy day,” she said. “Before today, I knew I wanted to (adopt), but after today I know I will. Seeing all these kids get to have this moment, it’s a moment of clarity. I definitely plan to be back here one day with my own kids.”

<http://www.bellinghamherald.com/2010/11/19/1730214/whatcom-county-families-celebrate.html>

## Mentors can change lives

If anyone ever asks Ryan Cummings “who mentored you?” he can point enthusiastically and without hesitation to Lynne Welton, a person he said has made a huge difference in his life.

The 17-year-old high school senior and foster youth will graduate from Timberline High School in Lacey in June. He gives a great deal of credit for that to Welton.

“I would not have been able to pull all the way through without Lynne,” Cummings said. “She has always been there motivating me when stuff fell through the cracks, when I fell behind. She is just an amazing person.”

Welton is a foster parent trainer for Children’s Administration. She has a background and passion for education and for helping young people use education to unlock the door to their future.



She hooked up with Ryan through a program at Community Youth Services in Olympia. She was looking for someone to mentor and Ryan was glad for the help.

They met first at a library and spent the first few months “rapport building,” Welton said. Their relationship has grown since then.

“I feel like you are another person who

can partner with the foster parent and social worker to move the kid forward,” Welton said.

She has provided him advice on school work, study habits, time management and gave him guidance on how to take the steps he needed to take in school to succeed.

As he has prepared for graduation, she has helped guide him through the maze that is the senior year of high school. They have taken day trips to Pacific Lutheran University and Seattle University to look at college possibilities. She helped him fill out financial aid forms and work on the application for the Governor’s Scholarship for foster kids.

“Being a mentor is kind leading and following,” she said. “You can both give them help but you have to listen really carefully to what they say.”

Continued on next page



## Obtaining eyeglasses for children in foster care

Some foster parents have recently asked about the process for getting eyeglasses for kids in care and what to do if they experience difficulties in obtaining them. The information below is intended to help answer the questions raised.

When your foster child sees a Medicaid Optometrist/Ophthalmologist and receives a prescription for glasses or lenses, his glasses will be ordered from Airway Optical.

1. The eye doctor (provider) or optical shop needs to submit a fully completed request to Airway Optical. If the request is not complete, Airway will return it to the provider for completion.
2. Once Airway receives a fully completed request, it takes approximately two weeks to process the order and ship the completed glasses/lenses back to the provider.

**If you have not been notified the glasses are ready after two weeks, here are steps that might be helpful:**

- Ask the provider to confirm the date the completed request was sent to Airway
- Make sure Airway has had at least two full weeks to fill the order
- Contact the provider to see if the glasses are in
- If the glasses have not arrived, ask the provider if they have contacted Airway to determine the status, or if there has been a delay, you can contact the Fostering Well-Being Program at the DSHS Medicaid Purchasing Agency (MPA) at [DHSFWBCCU@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:DHSFWBCCU@dshs.wa.gov), or call 360-725-5954, or toll free at 1-800-562-3022 ext. 59594.

**When contacting the Fostering Well-Being Unit, you will need to have the:**

- Provider's name;
- Child's name and
- Provider One client ID number.

The Fostering Well-Being Unit can facilitate contacts with the Vision Program at the Medicaid Purchasing Administration and Airway Heights to discuss any issues.

**Other ideas:**

- When possible, keep the child's previous glasses to be used as a "back-up" pair.
- Continue to encourage and teach the children in your care to protect and take care of their glasses. Rough play always brings the risk of breakage for children who wear glasses.

As their relationship has grown, she has been able to talk over life issues with him beyond those directly related to school.

"You have to be concerned about the whole well being of the youth," she said. "You get interested and involved in their lives. He confides in me."

Ryan is enthusiastic about the possibility of going to PLU, although his career goals are uncertain. But he is grateful for the help he has gotten from Welton and is certain their relationship will continue.

"She is more like a mother than a mentor to me," he said.



Lynne Welton

"Today is like Christmas," (adoptive mom) Ann Campbell said, waiting for the (adoption) ceremony to start. "Your heart is there, and you have accepted the children as your own." But until it's officially accepted by the judge, there's a little uneasiness there. This just makes it final. There's a real joy about it. You feel like going out and celebrating."

<http://yakima-herald.com/stories/2010/11/15/national-adoption-day-12-youths-now-have-forever-families>

"Every child wants a home; every child deserves a family," Snohomish County Superior Court Judge Dave Kurtz said.

<http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20101120/NEWS01/710039862>

Asked her favorite adoption memories, (Thurston County Superior court Judge Ann) Hirsch said she remembers one occasion where 20 people crowded into her tiny office to witness the ceremony. "The whole family was adopting the child," Hirsch said. "Every single story is a wonderful story. It's a very powerful thing."

<http://www.theolympian.com/2010/11/28/1455165/day-in-court-creates-new-families.html>



# Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

**Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868**

## ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

**Family Help Line:** 1-800-932-HOPE or [www.parenttrust.org](http://www.parenttrust.org). The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

**Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect:** Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

**Mental Health Crisis Line Information:** The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

## GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State is an all volunteer non-profit association. It is led by experienced caregivers who provide support and helpful services to all caregivers (foster, adoptive, and kinship) in Washington State. In addition, FPAWS advocates for caregivers with Washington's legislative officials, all levels of Children's Administration staff and other community service providers to enhance the child welfare system. Contact FPAWS at [fpaws.org](http://fpaws.org) or 1-800-391-CARE (2273).

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

## RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Girl Scouts of Western Washington: Fostering a Future: [MeccaYS@girlscouts.org](mailto:MeccaYS@girlscouts.org)

Women, Infant and Children Program (WIC):

<http://www.parenthelp123.org/resources/food-resources>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

## CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 2,200 people who have subscribed to the List Serve

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients.

There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.



## Foster parents association honors state staff members and others

On January 17, the Foster Parents Association of Washington State will honor state Children's Administration staff members and others at its second annual Night of A Thousand Dreams

### Luminary Awards:

- Steve Duvall, social worker from the Moses Lake CA office
- Erin Scheideman, former CA social worker now working for Service Alternatives
- Nacole Patterson, an adoption social worker in the Everett office
- Kim Johnson, a licensor with the Division of Licensed Resources in Region 4
- Margaret Wilkins, social worker in Region 5
- Debbie Conway, a former DSHS client, now a support for caregivers in Region 6

### Best Practices Award:

Camp To Belong Washington

### Steven and Danielle Baxter Award:

- State Children and Family Services Ombudsman Mary Meinig
- Perkins Coie law firm

### Bob Partlow Award:

Laurie Palmquist, a program manager with the Division of Licensed Resources in Region 1.

### Elected Official Award:

- U.S. Rep. Jim McDermott

"This is going to be a happy day to increase your family more than you have already," Island County presiding Judge Vickie Churchill said. "Sometimes I wonder who's blessed most, you or the children."

<http://www.pnwlocalnews.com/whidbey/wnt/community/110871039.html>